

CHAL-1088-60

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15 July 1960

FUTURE OF THE AGENCY'S U-2 CAPABILITY

1. The problem is whether a U-2 capability should be maintained in the hands of a joint CIA/USAF Project as in the past and, if so, for what purpose, on what scale, and where deployed.

2. Employment of the U-2s: It is assumed that, at least for the next seven months, no reconnaissance will be conducted with these aircraft over the USSR or the European Satellites. It is further assumed, however, that if a drastic change should occur in the world situation, this policy might be re-examined and that it may in any event be reconsidered eight months hence. This contingency should be provided for. In the meanwhile it is hoped that an appropriate way can be found to meet a high priority requirement for additional photographic reconnaissance

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3. Vulnerability: The vulnerability of the U-2 to the Soviet air defense system has been exhaustively studied by the Central Intelligence Agency and the Air Force in the light of the May Day incident. Early conclusions concerning that event and previous estimates of Soviet interception capabilities have been substantially reaffirmed to the effect that:

a. It is unlikely (but possible) that damage was inflicted on the aircraft at cruising altitude by a Soviet ground-to-air missile. The probable cause of its loss was a malfunction which forced it to descend below cruising altitude.

b. Any missions which might in the future be authorized over the USSR should avoid flying directly over known or suspected SAM (ground-to-air missile) sites. If this practice were followed, the probability of successful interception would remain low.

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4. Modifications: Certain modifications could be made in the U-2, with some sacrifice in range, in order to reduce vulnerability and eliminate dependence on bases close to the periphery of the Communist Bloc. These include the following:

a. Pyrophoric ignition, which permits an engine relight at or close to full cruising altitude in the event of a flameout not due to a basic malfunction.

b. Single side-band radio, which would permit recall of a mission in the event of evidence of dangerous attempts at interception.

c. Possibly a provision for improved electronic countermeasures, which would interfere with enemy missile guidance and thus reduce risk.

d. Capability for in-flight refueling, which would enhance mobility by making possible longer and safer ferry flights and would permit operational missions to be launched from bases 1,000 to 1,500 miles from the point of penetration of the target area.

5. Sponsorship and Cover: The U-2 program has involved from its inception the employment of these aircraft ostensibly (and most of the time actually) for innocent purposes but also for occasional clandestine overflight missions. It was organized jointly by the CIA and the Air Force but within the Agency's administrative framework and line of command in order to avoid any military coloration and to ensure that in the event of compromise the activity would be identified as a form of civilian espionage rather than an aggressive military act. If U-2 aircraft are to be available for the purposes set forth in paragraph 2. above, it would appear that the same considerations would apply and would argue for the maintenance of a capability under civilian, or non-U.S., or at any rate non-tactical cover.

6. Proposal:

a. A greatly reduced and redeployed U-2 capability will be maintained within the same organizational framework of a joint CIA/USAF Project and subject to the same control procedures as in the past. The modifications proposed in paragraph 4. above will be carried out on five aircraft. As

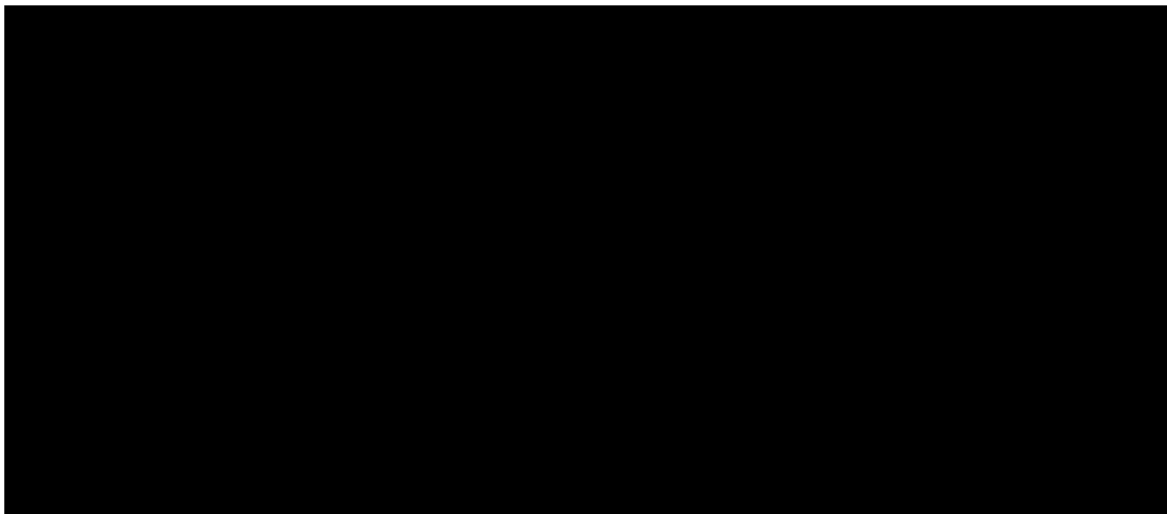
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soon as these modifications and redeployment are completed, half of the Agency's present inventory of 12 aircraft will be turned over to the Air Force for use by SAC and ARDC. 25X6C

b. All U-2s formerly deployed to [REDACTED] have been returned to the U.S.; those still deployed at [REDACTED] will be returned in the near future. 25X6C  
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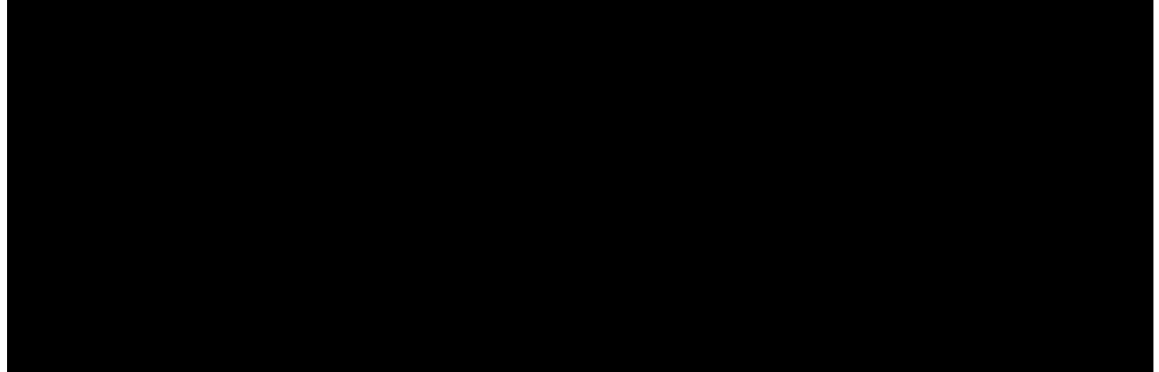
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d. It is proposed that the four other U-2s to be retained for this Project be maintained on a base in the ZI with trained personnel organized and prepared for quick staging to any part of the world where they may be required. Their typical mode of operation would be to make a ferry flight to a staging base overseas only when conditions are expected to be favorable for an operational mission, to complete the operational mission the following day or as soon as feasible, then to return to the ZI. This procedure would avoid charges that the U-2 is stationed at an overseas base and would avoid the need for a plausible but innocent explanation of the permanent basing of these aircraft near the USSR. Since with in-flight refueling even the staging bases can be reasonably remote from Communist areas, it is to be hoped that the Soviets would not even know what overseas bases were being used. Another technically feasible mode of operation would be to load the aircraft on a carrier (in port), launch at sea, refuel aloft close to the target area, and land at a staging base after completion of the mission. of NSC 10 committee

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7. Alternatives: The alternative to the maintenance in a reduced and modified form of a U-2 capability outside of the Military establishment is the liquidation of the existing Project and the transfer of all equipment to the Air Force. It should be emphasized that this capability could not be reconstituted without three to six months delay, mainly because the particular personnel could not be reassembled and considerable time would be required for recruitment, clearances, and training. On the other hand, there exists in SAC a wholly competent Military organization possessed of this capability.